

The Return of the Orange Tip

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(iv) In South Northumberland VC 67

In south Northumberland (VC 67), as in County Durham (VC 66), the Orange Tip apparently suffered a decline in numbers towards the end of last century, but it seems never to have become completely extinct. The first record is that of John Wallis at Simonburn: "Frequent in warm shady vales in May and June" in 1769 (*Natural History and Antiquities of Northumberland*, p.353).

The next three known records are in a notebook of Albany Hancock¹. They are for the Newcastle area: 4.6.1826 and 29.4.1827, "Sides of lanes common"; and his bother, John Hancock, similarly recorded it for Ponteland Road, 3.6.1827.

George Wailes recorded it on 1.6.1860 at Riding Mill between March Burn and Dilston Castle (*T.T.N.F.C.* 5, 3); between 1861 and 1866, it was recorded each year at Stamfordham by J. F. Bigge and H. T. Mennell (*T.T.N.F.C.* 5, 209; 6, 50); and in the same period for Burradon 26.5.1861, Cambo 19.5.1862; and Plessey Woods 26.5.1865 (*ibid.* and *T.N.H.S.* 1, 237).

¹ MS. Notebook of Albany Hancock, in Hancock Museum, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Between 1867 and 1871 it was noted each year at Wallington by R. F. Wheeler, and on 16.6.1872 at Cresswell (*T.N.H.S.* 5, 99). This was the last known record for the century in VC 67, but in 1899, J. E. Robson wrote, "For some years this pretty species all but disappeared but it has resumed its usual numbers" (*T.N.H.S.* 12, 4).

The earliest records I know of Orange Tips in VC 67 this century occur in a notebook of G. T. Nicholson². For 4.6.1900 he wrote, "At Dipton near Hexham Rosie took one male Orange Tip". Again on 28.5.1901, he wrote — "Allendale, noticed this species flying in the locality". Similarly, on 4.6.1906 at West Dipton Burn, "Orange Tips seen but not caught". It is thus certain that Orange Tips were established in south Northumberland in the first decade of this century.

George Bolam, writing in 1925, said that Abel Chapman saw several about Houxty in 1918 — "The first he had ever seen anywhere in Northumberland. Since then it has appeared about Wark, in small numbers, in most years; and almost the same may be said of several other Tynedale localities, both to east and south" (*H.B.N.C.* 25, 522).

Other early records are to be found in the journal of W. G. Watson³ for Sidwood (N. Tyne). Orange Tips are there recorded for the garden at Sidwood on 1.5.1920, 30.5.1920, 2.6.1920, 5.6.1920 and on 27.5.1920 at Red Heugh Wood.

In 1930, J. R. Robinson wrote "A female Orange Tip, from which I now have eggs, taken at Ponteland, with one seen by Professor Harrison at Corbridge, shows that this

* Hancock Museum, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

¹ MS. Notebook of Albany Hancock, in Hancock Museum, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

butterfly can still be seen in South Northumberland" (*Vasculum*, **16**, 119).

In 1932, G. Bolam recorded one male in the glen below Staward Peel on 22.5.1932 (*Vasculum*, **19**, 123); and in 1934, F. C. Garrett wrote "Not uncommon in South Northumberland, but seems to be becoming more scarce" (*Vasculum*, **20**, 46). However, this interpretation may have been the exact reverse of the truth.

In the mid-thirties, Robert Craigs recorded Orange Tips in Redesdale, at Catcleugh, two on 27.5.1935, and at Rochester two on 27.5.1935 and 1.6.1935 (*H.B.N.C.* **29**, 17).

In 1941 it was observed as increasing near Stocksfield "between middle to end of June" (J. W. H. Harrison in *Vasculum*, **27**, 6); and in 1942 the species was again recorded for Stocksfield by Mrs. T. E. Hodgkin — two seen (*Vasculum*, **27**, 32).

Similarly, in 1945 it was seen at Bardon Mill on 6.5.1945 by C. J. Gent (*Vasculum*, **30**, 47), and commonly in Allendale by J. S. Ash (*Vasculum*, **30**, 55).

In 1946 F. W. Gardner recorded it as "now quite common at Riding Mill" and added: "Has increased considerably of recent years" (*Vasculum*, **31**, 6).

In 1951 it was observed at Apperley Dene, 2.6.1951; in 1960, at the Sneap 21.5.1960 (J. W. H. Harrison (*Vasculum*, **36**, 11 and **45**, 11); and in 1963, F. W. Gardner again recorded it for Riding Mill as "of regular occurrence throughout the district and fairly common in favourable years" (*Vasculum*, **48**, 23 and *Ent. Gaz.* **13**, 22).

The increase continued in the seventies. Thus, it was seen in June 1970 by J. T. B. and D. Bowman south of Caw Lough near Bonnyrighg Hall not far from Hadrian's Wall (*Vasculum*, **59**, 44); and in the same year, J. D. Parrack saw one male just emerged at Plashett's Pond (N. Tyne) on 6.5.1970.

In 1971 one was seen on 1.5.1971 by A. M. Tynan at The Belling (N. Tyne), two more were seen at Plashett's Pond by J. D. Parrack on 28.5.1971 and 6.7.1971; and in 1972, the same observer saw specimens at Plashetts on 5.6.1972; at Bolam 5.6.1972, Smalesmouth, 28.4.1972 (a pupa) and at Williamstone (S. Tyne) on 28.6.1972.

In 1973, several pairs were seen at Slaggyford (S. Tyne) by Gfl Fenwick on 9.6.1973, J. D. Parrack observed one near Cresswell 11.7.1973 and three at Williamstone; in 1975 it was seen at Low Shilfurd near Stocksfield by O. L. Gilbert (*Vasculum*, **61**, 8), and also at Warden near Hexham by D. A. Sheppard and M. Eyre on 1.6.1975; and in 1976, it was noted at Stocksfield 8.6.1976 and at Close House near Newcastle on 27.5.1976 by D. A. Sheppard, and J. D. Parrack recorded six at Staward on 13.6.1976 (*Vasculum*, **61**, 96).

In 1977, it was again seen at Warden on 28.5.1977 by A. Garside, D. A. Sheppard and M. Eyre, and also at Whittle

³ MS. Journal of W. G. Watson, in Library of Northumbria Nat. Hist. Soc., at Hancock Museum.

² MS. Notebook of G. T. Nicholson, in Hancock Museum, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Dene 4.6.1977, and was observed at Heddon on the Wall by H. T. Eales on 21.5.1977. A male was seen flying across an open bare field between Bolam Lake and Shaftoe Crags on 22.5.1977 (A.G.L.). A single ovum was found at Wallington on *Alliaria petiolata*, by P. Summers on 20.6.1977.

In 1978 the increase was much in evidence in the S. Tyne and N. Tyne areas. It was seen at Brunton, Humshaugh and Haughton on 28.5.1978 by M. E. Braithwaite, at Chirdon Burn by A. M. Tynan, at the Kielder Dam site on 3.6.1978 (A.G.L.), and between Riding Mill and Slaley on 29.5.1978 by Mrs. Pybus of Dipton House.

It is clear therefore that in south Northumberland (VC 67), there is evidence of almost a continued presence of the Orange Tip from the time of John Wallis (1796) to the present (1978), with a possible diminution of numbers in the period between 1872 and sometime before 1899, when Robson published the first part of his "Catalogue". This partial break coincides more or less with the apparent extinction in Berwickshire lasting the greater part of a century.

(to be continued)

THE GREAT BROCADE (*EUROIS OCCULTA* L.): A STRANGE HABIT OF THE LARVAE IN CAPTIVITY. — Whilst in Scotland this year I collected a number of larvae of this species, and fed them up on birch at home. After about a week I noticed in one cage a larva infested with a hymenopterous parasite. These parasites had spun up a communal "candy floss" cocoon on a birch stem. Being a bit lazy at the time I left the stem in the cage as the *occulta* had plenty of foodplant. On preparing to change over to fresh food a few days later, I noticed with amazement a full grown *occulta* larva with its head and front segments actually inside the parasite cocoon. The following day the cocoon had vanished. I can only assume the larva had devoured the entire cocoon with its unsavoury occupants (my apologies to hymenopterists). There was no shortage of birch in the cage.

No doubt this change of diet suited the larva, but I wonder if this particular instance classes *occulta* as a cannibal. The larvae certainly do not eat one another in captivity. Incidentally, I have found they have a great liking for birch catkins which they devour readily, usually leaving some of the catkin uneaten. — J. PLATTS, 11 Maydowns Road, Chestfield, Whitstable Kent.

LIMENITIS CAMILLA LINN. AT FRISTON, NEAR EASTBOURNE, EAST SUSSEX. — In rather dull weather on the 20th July, 1978, I observed two *Limentis camilla* flitting through the trees in an area of Friston Forest where honeysuckle abounded. This prompted further investigation and on the 21st of July, another dull day, a further five were seen in the same locality. I decided to wait for a sunny day and luckily I only had to wait until the 24th July, when I returned to see at least 20 in flight, basking in the sun or resting on bramble flowers. — MARK PARSONS, 43 King's Avenue, Eastbourne, East Sussex.